

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

The Haunted History of Halloween

Ghosts, goblins, witches and fairies! These are the characters that take center stage every October 31st. Halloween is one of America and the world's favorite holidays, a day for pranks and trick-or-treating, parties and costumes and just plain old fun. But what are the origins of this holiday? Where did these Halloween traditions come from, and what was their original purpose? *The Haunted History of Halloween* takes a look at the history and evolution of the holiday, with some chilling results! *The Haunted History of Halloween* would be useful for American History, World History, Cultural History, Religion and Geography. It is appropriate for elementary school, middle school and high school.

- [appease](#)
- [appropriation](#)
- [deities](#)
- [demonic](#)
- [divination](#)
- [effigy](#)
- [embodiment](#)
- [entrails](#)
- [exploit](#)
- [nocturnal](#)
- [occult](#)
- [pantheon](#)
- [placate](#)
- [prudish](#)
- [refurbished](#)
- [revelry](#)
- [seductive](#)
- [synthesis](#)
- [trepidation](#)
- [zealots](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Halloween is a holiday of mirth, mischief and some scary fun. But the holiday has its origins in the distant past. What are the origins of this holiday that began 3000 years ago?
2. Discuss the role of agriculture in the rituals of many societies. Why is Halloween associated with the harvest?
3. Discuss the Celtic origins of the tradition of trick-or-treating.
4. Discuss the origins of telling ghost stories on Halloween.
5. Discuss the origins of bobbing for apples.
6. When Christianity swept through the Western world it met with some resistance from pagans. Discuss how Christianity co-opted many of the cultural customs and pagan rituals in order to attract converts.
7. The ancient Celts celebrated the harvest festival of Samhain. Discuss how the Catholic Church co-opted this ancient holiday and its influence on modern-day Halloween celebrations.
8. How did October 31 get the name Halloween?
9. In the middle ages and well into the eighteenth century, many women were accused of witchcraft and executed. Why were women vulnerable to the charge

of witchcraft? Why did women who transgressed accepted gender roles or boundaries cause “witch hunts?”

10. Why is the state of Virginia the birthplace of the American Halloween celebration?
11. Discuss the role of immigration in American Halloween history.

Extended Activities

1. Design a costume that you would like to wear for Halloween.
2. Write a ghost story to tell on Halloween night.
3. Create a timeline that illustrates the evolution of the Halloween holiday in America.